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WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2009

In Today's Papers

Peace Plans for Nagorno Karabakh
Mainstream Hurriyet reports that Turkish Foreign Minister Ali Babacan flew to Baku to meet Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev and discuss a peace plan for Nagorno Karabakh. According to Hurriyet, details of the plan were drafted during meetings at the Munich security conference last weekend. The plan calls for Armenia to gradually hand the territories around Nagorno Karabakh back to Azerbaijan. In addition, Azeris who were forced to leave their homes in these territories would be allowed to return to their homes. Also, an Interim administration would be established in order to determine the status of Nagorno Karabakh and finally, an international peacekeeping force could be deployed at the border between Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh.

Meanwhile, tabloid Aksam reports that Babacan postponed his trip to Lithuania in light of Egyptian President Mubarak's upcoming visit to Turkey. Following the visit of Mubarak, Babacan will go to Yemen, the paper notes. Islamist-oriented Zaman reports that Serbian Foreign Minister Jeremic has postponed his visit to Turkey on February 24-25, in reaction to the recent trip of FM Babacan to Kosovo. The paper notes that Belgrade "was infuriated by Babacan's comments in Kosovo saying that Turkey was mobilizing international support for Kosovo." On the same day Serbian Foreign Ministry officials contacted the Turkish Embassy in Belgrade to express their concern over the Turkish support for Kosovo.

Baykal in Brussels

Mainstream Milliyet reports that main opposition party CHP leader Deniz Baykal met with EU Commission Chair Jose Manuel Barroso in Brussels yesterday. During his speech at the European Policies Center, Baykal stressed that his party strongly supported all efforts to make Turkey an EU member and the negotiations should end in Turkey's full membership in the union. Baykal said "reforms and legal adjustments have been made upon the EU's direction. All these were done to improve democratic life in Turkey, however, today we cannot say that Turkish people are more secure, free and more European compared to seven years ago. European values have been damaged gradually by the assignments on higher levels in the fields

of education and culture. With each step of the AKP government, Turkey has become more conservative and changed its direction towards the values of the Middle East. The level of pressure on the media in Turkey has never been this high. Corruption and irregularities have reached to the highest levels. Even the understandings regarding terrorism changed according to religious tendencies. We cannot consider ourselves as a part of the geography of Hamas and Hezbollah. The EU looks at the secularism issue through their own glasses and considers our determination on secularism as antidemocratic. Unfortunately, some circles are trying to change Turkey's structure. And defending secularism is not only the military's duty but at the same time it is the politicians' and public's duty. The CHP is ready to carry Europe's democracy and human rights standards to Turkey."

5 Military Officers Detained under 'Ergenekon' Investigation
Media outlets report on Tuesday, police detained five military officers in Istanbul and Balikesir under the 'Ergenekon' investigation after an Air Forces prosecutor ordered their arrest. The military prosecutor's office earlier questioned 20 military officers and War College students under a scheme named "Headquarters Houses," in which military students were allegedly brought together in secret anti-government meetings. The Turkish intelligence organization MIT earlier notified the military General Staff (TGS) about anti-government activities of an illegal network within the military in "Headquarters Houses," according to reports.

AKP Leaders' Children Make Huge Profits in Business
Hurriyet and Cumhuriyet report that since AKP swept to power in Turkey in 2002, the children of some of the ruling party leaders and

ANKARA 00000241 002 OF 003

cabinet ministers have built 18 companies and have made millions of dollars in profit. In "Talented Kids," leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports the children and relatives of cabinet ministers Kemal Unakitan (Finance), Binali Yildirim (Transport), Faruz Nafiz Ozak (Housing), and Osman Pepe (Forestry) all made at least 1 million dollars before they turned 30, in spite of the fact that they had no business dealings before the AKP began governing Turkey.

Prime Minister Erdogan's son Bilal is a partner in a jewelry company Atagold and a foreign trade company Maye besides being the Turkey distributor of the American cosmetics producer Bellapierre. The PM's elder son, Burak, bought the 4,495 dwt ton of Safran-1 ship for 2,350,000 dollars immediately after he founded MB Maritime Co. in 2007. Food company AB Gida, owned by the wife and children of Finance Minister Kemal Unakitan, made 22.1 million lira in profit in 2005. AB Gida, however, paid no VAT to the state in the same year. The company also began selling pasteurized liquid egg under the brand "Unakitan," and the VAT for liquid egg was lowered by the government, say papers.

Erdogan, Chavez Posters in Beirut
Mainstream Milliyet reports that in Dahiya, a poor Shiite neighborhood in Beirut controlled by Hezbollah, Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan and Venezuelan President Chavez's posters were posted on billboards and walls along the roads. Erdogan and Chavez, the "two brave men," were shown as role models next to Arab leaders who remained silent in the face of the Israeli assault on Gaza, reports Milliyet.

Ece Temelkuran wrote in mainstream Milliyet: "In the streets of Beirut, there are posters featuring Prime Minister Erdogan and Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez as 'real symbols of manly behavior' as opposed to 'Arab men who sleep.' That degree of popularity may be flattering for Erdogan, but it raises the potential danger of making the AKP look like a symbol of support for Hamas and Hezbollah."

Editorial Commentary on Turkey's Foreign Policy

Hakan Albayrak wrote in Islamist oriented Yeni Safak: "Representatives from the Turkish NGO Mazlum-Der met with Minister of Justice Sahin to lobby for a campaign against Israel. Mazlum-Der wants Israeli officials to be tried on charges including crimes against humanity and genocide. This Mazlum-Der campaign should be wholeheartedly supported. We are looking forward to seeing Minister

Sahin's approval to open the case against Israel."

Abdulhamit Bilici wrote in Islamist oriented Zaman: "A former high-level American official commented that PM Erdogan's Davos antics reminded him of former U.S. President Jimmy Carter. At first I thought it was merely a flattering remark, but a deeper look into Carter's history indicates that there is indeed a resemblance. In particular, Carter differs from other American leaders in that he seeks a balance between Palestine and Israel; he also supports the inclusion of Hamas during negotiations for peace."

Sami Kohen wrote in mainstream Milliyet: Sudan is a country with rich natural resources and lots of possibilities for increased investment from Turkish businessmen. Also, it is possible that Sudan's Islamist government has the sympathy of PM Erdogan, which could explain the reason why Turkey is pursuing such close ties with this African country, led by a man who is charged with the ethnic cleansing of over 200,000 women, children, and civilians. Yet, out of a sense of moral sensitivity and out of respect to our allies who are members of the ICC, it is important that Turkey not forget the ICC's genocide charges against Al-Bashir."

TV News (CNN Turk)
Domestic

- Finance Minister Kemal Unakitan flew to the U.S. after he was

ANKARA 00000241 003 OF 003

discharged from an Ankara hospital after undergoing a coronary angiogram. Unakitan, diagnosed with three blocked arteries, will be treated by Turkish M.D. Professor Murat Tuzcu at Ohio's Cleveland Clinic.

- The Turkish Parliament approves a government motion to deploy a frigate off the coast of Somalia to join operations against piracy.

- A Turkish court tells the Interior Ministry to initiate legal procedures for the extradition of Abdulkadir Aygan, a former PKK militant turned 'confessor,' from Sweden where he was given asylum.

- Justice Minister Mehmet Ali Sahin issued a notice according to which prison inmates will be allowed to see their spouses and children on Valentine's Day.

- Independent MP Mesut Yilmaz, former chairman of Anavatan Party, will establish a new political party which, he said, would be an "alternative to the ruling AKP."

World

- Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni's Kadima party has a narrow lead over former PM Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud in Israeli elections Tuesday, according to television exit polls.

- French President Nicolas Sarkozy has visited Baghdad for the first time, in an effort to rebuild ties.

- Thousands of Iranians rally in the capital Tehran, celebrating 30 years of the Iranian revolution.

- President Dmitry Medvedev says Russia set a new post-Soviet record in weapons sales last year.

JEFFREY